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Fighting N. Carolina resegregation Racist school plan ignites struggle

**By Fight Imperialism,
Stand Together (FIST)
Raleigh, N.C.**

The looming threat of a return to the dark days of Jim Crow segregation has ignited a broad struggle against the racist new Raleigh school board majority.

On March 23, the board was scheduled to take the second of two votes needed to dismantle the system's busing program and move to a "neighborhood schools" model. It would mean the resegregation of the school system.

With less than 24 hours notice, the board instituted a number of restrictions in access to the meeting, including: taking seats out of the already insufficient seating area; requiring the public to get a ticket for the meeting at 10 a.m. and then stay in the building until 3 p.m. or forfeit the ticket; bringing in dozens of cops and security guards, and erecting a barricade between the board and the public.

It was all designed to stifle the overwhelming opposition to their agenda.

When the board decided to cut off public comment and begin voting on the resegregation plans, a group of nearly 70 high school students attempted to make their way into the meeting.

After being shut out by a line of cops, the students began a spirited sit-in right outside the meeting room, chanting, "Shut it down! No segregation in our town!"

Parents, teachers and community members from several different progressive and civil rights organizations immediately joined the students in the hallway, taking their lead.

The sit-in forced the board into recess. Chair Ron Margiotta came out to the hallway to tell students to "respect the process." He was drowned out as the students began to chant, "Hey hey, ho ho! Pope Foundation's got to go!" This ultra-right foundation is the funder of the racist new majority on the board and architect of a 30-year plan to dismantle public education.

Resistance continues despite arrests

One student was arrested in the hallway and the rest were kicked out of the building by the cops. But that did not dampen the energy of the demonstrators, who continued to rally outside for nearly two and a half hours. Two more arrests were made outside as students attempted to reenter the building and make their voices heard before the vote.

Because of the size and scope of the demonstration, as well as the broad base of organizations represented, the story was covered in numerous major news outlets around the country. National media has been forced to report on the issue for what it is: a powerful anti-racist struggle waged by the community that exposes the clear connections between this racist school board majority and the larger power brokers at play.

After 30 years of solid community backing of the busing program, the new majority on the school board, dubbed the Resegregationist 5, was elected in an

off-year of the staggered election cycle by only 5 percent of registered voters.

Behind this carefully orchestrated plan to destroy public education are some of the richest conservatives in North Carolina: Art Pope of the John W. Pope Foundation, Robert Luddy of the Civitas Institute, and Americans for Prosperity, the group behind the right-wing "Tea Party" protests.

Ron Margiotta, chair of the school board, also sits on the board of trustees for Thales Academy, a private school in Apex, a suburb of Raleigh.

It is clear that this is a battle of ideology, not fact. The election of the new majority is but another piece in the master plan of Pope and his cohorts to spread their right-wing agenda to public education and to ultimately put education into the hands of private interests. They have already been behind dismantling the Women and Gender Studies Program at North Carolina State University and funding "Western Studies" programs in

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STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

New York: Hundreds march in solidarity with women's resistance around the world. Article, page 4.

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Texas death row

A stay for Hank Skinner – but it's not over

By Gloria Rubac
Livingston, Texas

Even as the minutes slipped away before her spouse was to be put to death, Sandrine Ageorges-Skinner never lost hope that he would win a reprieve.

"On the telephone earlier that day, I told him, 'I'm sure that you are going to live,'" the French anti-death penalty campaigner said. "He said to me, 'If you could see what I see all around me, you wouldn't say that.'"

"He was three meters from the death chamber and mere minutes from death when word came from the U.S. Supreme Court that granted a last-minute stay of execution," Ageorges-Skinner told Workers World.

Veteran abolition activist Njeri Shakur commented: "Talk of cruel and unusual! Hank has proclaimed his innocence for 15 years, has asked for DNA testing yet the district attorney refuses to release the DNA, and finally they take him to the death house. Then at the last minute his life is spared. The courts could have done this days ago or months ago or even years ago! Why did they torture this innocent man up to the last minute?"

Forty minutes before he was to be executed on March 24, Texas death row prisoner and activist Hank Skinner was spared by the U.S. Supreme Court. His spouse and two daughters had told him good-bye, his friend and spiritual advisor had met with him and was prepared to witness the execution, Skinner had eaten his last meal, and he had resigned himself to being murdered by the state of Texas.

With a crowd of Skinner's supporters gathering outside the death house, lawyer Rob Owen arrived at the Huntsville hotel where Ageorges-Skinner, her step-daughter Natalie Skinner, and a throng of supporters were getting into their cars to drive the two miles to the Walls Unit where Skinner was awaiting execution. When Owen announced a stay, screams and cries of joy pierced the quiet air of this small East Texas prison town.

An impromptu victory rally was held minutes later outside the death house. A leader of the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement took the microphone and blasted the cowardly state officials who were going to allow an execution when the forensic evidence had not even been tested. She then introduced Skinner's family, who addressed the crowd.

'It's still not over'

"I thank all of you who are here today who have stood by us on this journey. I wouldn't have been able to stand up and talk right now if not for you. It is still not over, however," Ageorges-Skinner said.

"The Supreme Court granted a stay so they could have more time to consider whether to accept Hank's cert petition. If they accept it, then it could be a while before they rule on whether to allow him to proceed to sue the Gray County D.A. to release the evidence for testing. If they do not accept the cert petition, then Tex-

as will be free to set another execution date."

Ron Carlson, who has lived through the murder of his sister, Deborah Thornton, in 1983 and his father less than a year later, also spoke. He stressed that executions were vengeance, and should be abolished.

Activist Angie Agapetus spoke to the crowd about Sam Bustamante's scheduled execution on April 27. "Sam should not be executed. He has mental health issues that should stop it. Please write to the governor and Board of Pardons and ask that they grant clemency for Sam."

While dozens of Skinner's supporters gathered to celebrate at a local Mexican restaurant, Ageorges-Skinner and Curtis McCarty, an Oklahoman who came within hours of execution before DNA evidence exonerated him, snuck away with CNN staff and cameras to appear live on the Larry King Show. Supporters watched the show from the restaurant, cheering when Skinner was interviewed. He told how he couldn't get any Texas court to order DNA testing, even though it could prove either his innocence or his guilt.

Skinner arrived on Texas death row in 1995, and has consistently stood up for not only his own rights but those of others. He has written a newsletter over the years entitled "The Hell Hole News" that has chronicled the injustices and violations of laws by the wardens, guards and staff at death row.

For his activism, Skinner has been targeted by prison staff for especially cruel treatment, right up to the last days before his scheduled execution. His spouse was banned from writing and visiting him for the last 22 months, based on fabricated charges.

Skinner has stayed strong, even while being tortured. His cell has been searched four times a day, and he was stripped of all his personal and legal property. He has been denied many visits, including one by a Papal emissary the week before his scheduled execution.

The struggle to save Skinner's life came on the heels of an Anti-Death Penalty Alternative Spring Break held in Austin the week of March 15-19. Scores of students from around Texas and the United States gathered to learn about the use of the death penalty, how to organize against it, how to do media work, how to organize a rally and how to lobby a state legislature.

Students lobbied on Skinner's behalf. As a result Texas Sen. Rodney Ellis and State Rep. Elliott Naishat wrote letters to Texas Gov. Rick Perry asking for a stay of execution to allow for DNA testing.

A highlight of the week was the presence of six men who had collectively served over 65 years on death rows around the country but were released after being proven innocent. All six spoke at a Capitol rally that ended the week on a high note.

"A quick reminder, April 4 is Hank's birthday, so don't hesitate to drop him a line or send him a card," Ageorges-Skinner told Workers World. His address is Henry Skinner #999143, Polunsky Unit, 3872 F.M. 350 South, Livingston, TX 77351. (www.hankskinner.org) □

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The health care law, racism and fighting the right

By Fred Goldstein

With 30 million unemployed or underemployed, the failure of the just-signed health care law to meet the needs and expectations of the population, plus its give-away to the health care industry, is bound to add to the frustration and alienation of the workers.

President Barack Obama's signature was hardly dry when the health insurance industry announced its intention to get out of the new legal requirement to cover children with pre-existing conditions.

The industry came up with a twisted interpretation of the law that clearly violates its intent, as understood by everyone who promoted it and everyone who heard about it.

According to the March 29 New York Times, "The authors of the law say they meant to ban all forms of discrimination against children with pre-existing conditions like asthma, diabetes, birth defects, orthopedic problems, leukemia, cystic fibrosis and sickle cell disease. The goal, they say, was to provide those youngsters with access to insurance and to a full range of benefits once they are in a health plan.

"To insurance companies, the language of the law is not so clear.

"Insurers agree that if they provide insurance for a child, they must cover pre-existing conditions. But, they say, the law does not require them to write insurance for the child and it does not guarantee the 'availability of coverage' for all until 2014."

The insurers claim that "if a company sells insurance, it will have to cover pre-existing conditions for children covered by the policy. But it does not have to sell to somebody with a pre-existing condition. And the insurer could increase premiums to cover the additional cost."

Aetna tells it like it is

This is what comes of a law leaving the private profit-making corporate vultures in charge of health care. They immediately reneged on their promises and humiliated the Obama administration.

The Democratic Party leadership had done their bidding. It gave them hundreds of billions of dollars in concessions — particularly the onerous mandate forcing 16 million people to buy insurance starting in 2014. And then these parasites turned around and stabbed the Democrats in the back.

A similarly ominous warning was contained in a March 25 Business Week interview that Charlie Rose conducted with Ron Williams. Williams is CEO of Aetna, which insures 36 million people.

Rose asked Williams if insurance premiums will go up. "The answer is yes, and some of the things that will drive those premiums are significant additional taxes the industry will ultimately have to pay in the first year." Clearly, the health care bill is not going to stop the companies from gouging profits.

Rose recited to Williams the line that President Obama has been repeating over and over again — that if you have a policy you like, it won't change. Williams said that was not true. The industry might make you take a higher-priced policy, forcing workers to pay for unwanted benefits.

This kind of obstructionism, right out in the open during the first week of the new law, gives a taste of what is in store for the workers and the middle class. Dr. Claudia Chaufan of the California Physicians for a National Health Program wrote in the Sacramento Bee on March 26: "This 'historic bill,' instead of eliminating the root of our health care woes, further enriches and entrenches a profit-driven health insurance industry that makes money when it succeeds in not paying medical bills."

What backers of health care law don't say

The progressive benefits of the law come at the price of excluding undocumented workers, further curtailing women's reproductive rights and leaving the profiteers in charge. Rose Ann DeMoro, executive director of National Nurses United, AFL-CIO, gave some examples in the Huffington Post of March 24:

- Insurance premiums will continue to climb, as a federal rate insurance authority was dropped from the bill.
- Insurers remain in control of what they offer and what will be a covered service.
- There are no meaningful restrictions on claims' denials that insurers don't want to pay, and the "internal review process" remains in the hands of the insurers.
- Companies can more than double charges to employees who fail "wellness" programs because they have diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol readings or other medical conditions.
- Insurers can sell policies "across state lines," exempting patient protections passed in other states. Insurers will likely set up in the least-regulated states.
- Insurers can charge three times more based on age, plus more for certain conditions, and continue to use marketing techniques to cherry-pick healthier, less costly enrollees.
- Insurers can continue to rescind policies and drop coverage for "fraud or intentional misrepresentation" — the main pretext insurance companies now use.
- Health benefits will be taxed for the first time, with a 40 percent tax on plans whose value exceeds \$10,200 for individuals or \$27,500 for families, starting in 2018.

Media love to cover Tea Party

The failure of the law to meet the people's needs and expectations, combined with mass unemployment and economic attacks from every direction, will further fuel economic and social tensions. This widens the political opening for the ultra-right.

The right wing is using the alienation created by the economic crisis to foment racism and fascist ideology. It is denouncing the health care bill from the right and using the jobs crisis demagogically

against the Obama administration. And the fascist elements around the Tea Party have been given unlimited publicity by the capitalist press.

This publicity is provided as "news." But the news coverage by the big business press is highly selective in favor of the right wing. They can play something up or they can bury it.

For example, there was a demonstration of more than 200,000 immigrants in Washington, D.C., on March 21 demanding justice for 12 million undocumented workers. It got a bare mention and was quickly dropped. Thousands of anti-war demonstrators in Washington on March 20 were almost completely censored. And more than a hundred demonstrations by the labor movement against the banks is hardly news at all.

The corporate media continue to publicize the Tea Party, sometimes in the guise of criticism, but it gives them publicity nonetheless. This in spite of the fact that a racist, homophobic Tea Party mob spit and hurled racist epithets at John Lewis and other Black legislators at the Capitol building. The mob then hurled homophobic insults at openly gay Congressperson Barney Frank.

The press eggs on the Tea Party fascists, knowing that at their convention in February Tom Tancredo made a racist speech to a standing ovation. He railed against immigrant workers and all oppressed people, denouncing them for electing a "socialist president."

Time to fight the right

Sarah Palin, another star at that poorly attended convention, is now on a Tea-Party-sponsored tour, whipping up the right wing and pleasing the fascist elements with her map of offices of Democratic Party legislators, accompanied by the slogan "reload."

The Tea Party and fascist elements who gather around it are hardly a consolidated movement with a fixed ideology and program. This movement is financed by

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Marxists struggle over ideas at Left Forum

By John Catalinotto
New York

While thousands protested the Iraq and Afghanistan wars on March 20 and hundreds of thousands rallied for immigrant rights in Washington on March 21, several thousand people interested in Marxism participated in the Left Forum at Pace University in NYC for a struggle over ideas.

The LF is the largest annual gathering in the United States to hear Marxist scholars, most from universities and colleges. Organizers say this year's attendance, with more than 3,500 registered, was the largest since the LF started as the Socialist Scholars Conference in 1982. There were 200-plus panels with more than 700 speakers and 90 distributors of books, magazines and other media.

The LF's Marxism has a distinct social-democratic bias, that is, it tries to omit Lenin. The main force is the Democratic Socialists of America, usually allied with the Democratic Party. At the LF, however, communists, anti-imperialists, and other activists and a broad range of speakers have a chance to raise their voices.

The two plenary meetings set the overall political tone. The March 19 opening plenum, where civil rights activist Rev. Jesse Jackson was the keynote speaker, overflowed the 700-seat auditorium and had to be broadcast to a nearby room. Jackson urged activism, but appealed to loyalty to the Democratic Party and the current administration — that is, he tied the activism to U.S. imperialism.

The closing plenary featured Noam Chomsky, who sharply criticized the U.S. occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and the role of the Barack Obama administration, but his critique was unattached to any suggestion of struggle. In his otherwise anti-imperialist commentary, Chomsky made a gratuitous attack on the late Korean communist leader Kim Il-Sung. The remark had nothing to do with Chomsky's general talk; it seemed its sole purpose was to show Chomsky's anti-communist side.

Role of activists and communists

In the workshops, however, leftist, communist and activist forces could raise their ideas. Some academic Marxists at the forum also defended revolutionary

ideas, although they tend to be isolated from any form of action, given the low level of class struggle.

Activists participated in panels or staffed literature tables for political prisoners like Mumia Abu-Jamal or the Cuban Five, defended the revolutionary movements in Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia or agitated for a single-payer health care system.

This report mainly covers those panels that involved the organizations and individuals we frequently write about in Workers World newspaper.

The strongest such panel was on Sunday and was titled, "How to Fight Disappearing Jobs and Falling Wages: Labor Strategies in the Epoch of Low-wage Capitalism." It was organized by Dee Knight. Speakers were Million Worker March spokesperson Brenda Stokeley, BAYAN USA Chairperson Berna Ellorin and Workers World contributing editor Fred Goldstein, author of "Low-Wage Capitalism."

The audience, which had Black, Latino/a and Asian participation, was far more representative of people of color than the LF in general. More than half

signed up for further contact, reflecting the excellent quality of the presentations. Together, the three gave a comprehensive overview of the economic crisis, the effect of globalization on the oppressed and the fightback that is necessary.

Extended and lively discussion included serious questions from the audience on the role of the Democratic Party and the labor movement, how to fight the right, how to organize within the labor movement from the rank-and-file up, and how to deal with the question of super-exploited workers abroad, such as call centers in the Philippines that are set up to compete with workers in the U.S. Closer to home, the panel discussed how to get the union movement to recognize the cause of homeless workers and the role of militarization in the economy.

The workshop was a living example of how every struggle against exploitation, war and oppression is a workers' struggle, and drew the conclusion that only socialism can end the crisis of capitalist society.

At a panel on education, Fight Imperialism Stand Together (FIST) leader Larry Hales spoke on the March 4 national stu-

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In the streets of New York

Women's resistance is honored

By Brenda Ryan
New York

Women of all ages and nationalities gathered here on March 27 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. The march and rallies were initiated by the International Working Women's Day Coalition. The event was celebratory and moving as participants honored women who have fought for justice and equality over the past century. The need for unity in the ongoing struggles women face at home and worldwide was a constant theme.

The opening rally was held at Union Square, a historic site of many political demonstrations, including those led by women at the turn of the 20th century. The rally was chaired by LeiLani Dowell, an organizer of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together, and Melanie Dulfo of Filipinas for Rights and Empowerment and GABRIELA USA. Speakers recognized the resistance of women around the world to violence and oppression, from the fight for legalization of immigrants, to freedom for political prisoners and the end of war in Afghanistan and Iraq. Women's issues at home, including health care, education, jobs and reproductive justice were also highlighted.

Dahlia Abi Saab of Al-Awda, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition, spoke of the struggle of Palestinian women against U.S.-Israeli attacks and for their right to their homeland. Jocelyn Gay, a Haitian activist and artist, described the legacy of Haiti's resistance to slavery. Other speakers included Ramatu Ahmed, deputy secretary of the National Council of Ghanaian Associations; Dalia Griñan, a ninth grader and co-organizer of the May 29 post-Katrina/Rita Awareness Walk; and Lucy Pagoada, a high school teacher and Honduran activist.

The spirited march was led by Working Women for Peace, a mostly Latina group that dressed like the women suffragettes who supported IWD a century ago. Along the way the march stopped in front of Bank of America, which has foreclosed on

Monica Moorehead, below, says that supporting political prisoners is a woman's issue.

WW PHOTOS:
BRENDA RYAN AND
JOHN CATALINOTTO



Gavrielle Gemma, a Bail Out the People Movement organizer, told the crowd that one-quarter of New York City's \$63 billion budget goes each year to the banks in tax-free interest payments. "We have to take back the wealth and give it to the people," she said.

A special ceremony for fire victims

Protesters then marched to the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire Memorial, the site of the 1911 fire in which 146 women and girls were killed because the bosses had barricaded the factory exits. Many of these immigrants jumped from the ninth floor to their deaths to escape the fire. Protesters wore nametags with the names and ages of those who died at the fire site. Brenda Stokely of the Million Worker March Movement and the IWWO coalition noted that at the time of the fire there were no fire codes, no child labor laws and no registration of buildings. She said sweatshops still exist and workers continue to die on the job. "We are here to honor all women and to fight against the cruelty and greed of the bosses," Stokely said.

Women called out the names of some of the victims and the names of others who have been important in the history of resistance. Ndigo, a cultural artist and activ-

hundreds of thousands of homes after receiving billions in bailout money from the federal government.

ist, performed an African libation. Nieves Ayress, a Chilean activist and member of La Peña del Bronx, called on people to destroy the capitalist system, which is continuing to exploit and kill women all over the world. Christine Williams, a rank-and-file transit worker, acknowledged the deaths of transit workers on the job.

On the way to a final rally at the Solidarity Center, the marchers stopped outside St. Vincent's Hospital in Greenwich Village to demand that it remain open. The hospital, which has served the poor since 1849, is facing closure.

Monica Moorehead, an IWWO and Women's Fightback organizer, chaired the closing rally. "An entire world system of capitalism is based on making profit, not satisfying people's needs," she said. "We need to connect with each other and build a powerful movement that can satisfy people's needs."

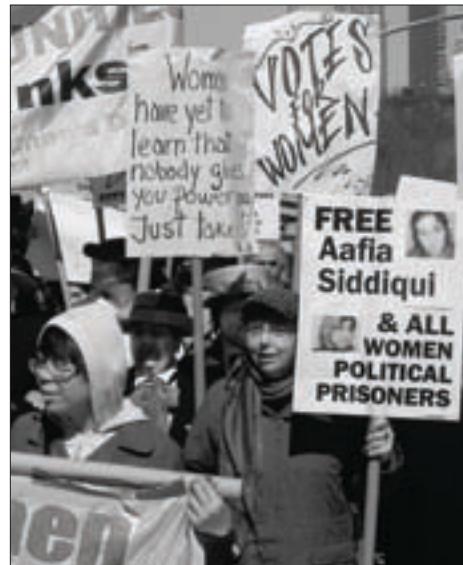
One of the contingents in the IWD march was a group of high school students from Build On, a youth organization that does community service locally and in other countries. At the closing session, Build On members Courtney Beckett of Mott Hall Bronx High School and Luis Alonso of the Bronx Center for Science and Mathematics expressed how important it was to them to be working to make a difference in people's lives.

Joyce Gill-Campbell, organizational coordinator with Domestic Workers United, described the racist and sexist treatment that Caribbean, Latina and African nannies, housekeepers and elderly caregivers face on the job. She noted that a Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights has been

introduced in the New York state Senate that would provide these super-exploited workers with paid vacations and holidays, overtime pay, protection from discrimination and inclusion in state labor laws.

Teresa Gutierrez, co-coordinator of the May 1 Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights, spoke about the historic march for immigrant rights in Washington, D.C., on March 21, where 250,000 people came to demand legalization, and the need to continue building the movement for May Day and forward. Sharon Black, a home health care worker and a coordinator of the May 1 Jobs Initiative in Washington, D.C., described the campaign to use the Works Project Administration of the 1930s to evoke what is needed now: a jobs program to put 30 million people back to work and to stop the avalanche of foreclosures, utility shutoffs, health care budget cuts and school closings. Valerie Francisco, a Filipina activist with Filipinas for Rights and Empowerment, talked about women's role in fighting for the abolition of imperialism and militarization.

The IWD event gave special recognition to Jamie and Gladys Scott, African-American sisters who were convicted of stealing \$11 and given double life sentences. They have been in prison almost 16 years. Attorney Jaribu Hill, executive director of the Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights, spoke about their case by phone. She called on people to write to the governor of Mississippi, members of Congress, and the commissioner of prisons to demand that they be released. Information about their case is at [www.freethescottssisters.blogspot.com](http://freethescottssisters.blogspot.com). □



Women's History Month

Native women fight to reclaim equality

By Dolores Cox
New York

The National Museum of the American Indian celebrated Women's History Month by paying tribute to the first woman to become president of the Oglala Sioux Tribe of South Dakota. Cecelia Fire Thunder lives on the Pine Ridge reservation and was in New York to attend the United Nations Conference on the Status of Women.

Now the former president, she recalled how, when elected in 2004, she was the target of much opposition and political attacks from the men in the tribe, who tried to impeach her. In December 2005, though, the Tribal Council voted to dismiss the impeachment ruling and she was reinstated. She also received support from tribal leaders throughout the country.

Fire Thunder greeted the audience in her native tongue. She told of growing up in a family and clan that always insisted on

practicing and maintaining the language, values and traditions of their people.

"The arrival of the Europeans to this land was the beginning of the end of Native people's way of life and the destruction of their culture," she stated. Born in 1946, she learned English in a Christian boarding school, as did other children of her generation. "They insisted on converting Native peoples to Christianity, often forcefully, which resulted in changing the structure of the Native family and community. History, as written by the white man, will not tell of such tragedies," she added.

Originally, the Pine Ridge territory consisted of 3 million acres. But the U.S. government gave much of the land to religious groups, who then established missionary schools as a way of "controlling" Indians through treaties, she said.

From that time on, the role of Lakota women began changing, as did male/female relationships, said Fire Thunder. Before then, women were considered sa-

cred and there was equality between men and women. Women had freedom then, and knew their history, who they were and where they came from. She spoke of the everyday kindness and goodness of Lakota women.

On reservations, the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs made life difficult for Indigenous people from the very beginning. So in 1963 her family moved to Los Angeles, as there were no social services on the Lakota reservation. Within 10 years hundreds of Native people relocated to East Los Angeles and settled in the Mexican community.

In the 1970s, Fire Thunder joined other Native women in starting a free clinic for struggling people in the city of Compton who were without health care. After doing much research on "learning how to speak the language of white men in government," she said, she started lobbying and writing grants.

Immersed in communities of Mexican, Black and Asian women, she worked with

them to obtain government support for poor women and children. In the late 1980s she helped to found the National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and established clinics. She also helped to found National Wellness Institutes in Oklahoma, Nevada, Arizona and South Dakota.

When she returned to her reservation in Pine Ridge, she found things had significantly changed in male/female relationships and there was a high rate of domestic violence, alcoholism, homicide, child abuse, increased high school dropout rates and even suicide.

She organized 300 women and in 1989 they were the first reservation to pass the Mandatory Arrest Ordinance, which detained men for 72 hours for domestic violence.

Another of her accomplishments centered on a woman's right to determine what she can do with her body. When the Catholic governor of South Dakota banned

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Thousands protest Boston school cuts

By Steve Gillis, Peter Cook & Frank Neisser
Boston

In response to Mayor Thomas M. Menino's announced massive defunding of and charter privatization program for Boston's public schools, over 2,000 people shut down the streets surrounding a building where Menino's hand-picked Boston School Committee was voting on March 24 to approve nearly \$60 million in budget cuts. The boisterous protest was organized by the Boston Teachers Union, the Coalition for Equal Quality Education, Boston Public Schools Custodians, and the Boston School Bus Drivers Union to demand, "Full Funding for Public Education, No Budget Cuts!"

The militant outpouring of parents, students, teachers, custodians, bus drivers and monitors and other community activists and supporters took over the School Department plaza, with noise-makers and loudspeakers broadcasting their anger. For the first time in years, unity and solidarity of the entire school workforce and communities confronted Menino's and city bondholders' plan.

Denouncing the layoffs and program cuts were Richard Stutman, Boston Teachers Union president; Robert Haynes, Massachusetts AFL-CIO president; Rich Rogers of the Greater Boston Labor Council; Dave Jelley, Custodians Union president; Steve Gillis, Boston School Bus Drivers Union vice president; Sandra McIntosh, Coalition for Equal Quality Education; City Councilors Felix Arroyo and Charles Yancey; as well as a representative of the American Civil Liberties Union, students, Bail Out the People Movement, Women's Fightback Network, Fight Imperialism, Stand Together, and many others. The Women's Fightback Network led an International Women's Day march that began at the State House and ended outside the School Committee meeting to join the rally.

The multigenerational and multinational crowd, including many immigrant workers, cheered as many speakers raised the slogans, "Money for Schools, Not for War!" and "Bail Out the Schools, Not the Banks!" Placards condemned privatization of education through charter schools and plans to resegregate "neighborhood" schools. Flyers for the Bail Out the People Movement's May 8th National Jobs Protest in Washington, D.C., were well received.

Several times people surrounded the building and climbed up into the windows to hang signs and chant into the chamber where the School Committee was cloistered, hearing testimony for even more massive cuts to school workers' health care insurance from the Boston Municipal Research Bureau, the city's business mouthpiece.

The Bureau had recently succeeded in writing massive cuts into Menino's general 2011 budget, slashing public services from libraries to housing to snow removal, while increasing payments to bondholders and establishing new police outstations in all the city's public housing developments.

The school committee chamber holds only 167 people, so protesters loudly raised the issue of the legitimacy of the vote to approve the new budget, arguing that the meeting should have taken place in a larger hall so that those who are most impacted by the cuts have the opportunity to express their outrage over the bondholders' budget.

Police Special Forces surrounded the building's perimeter and blockaded the doors, calling in motorcycle reinforcements and wagons, effectively turning



WW PHOTO: MAUREEN SKEHAN

Andre Francois of school bus drivers' union addresses rally as Boston police block door to School Committee public hearing.

the school's public headquarters into an armed camp. A determined contingent led by members of the Boston School Bus Drivers Union and the Custodians Union attempted to enter the building, but cops jamming with sharp batons and school administrators frantically tugging on doors engaged the workers, students and community leaders in a 10-minute scuffle, forcibly preventing the public from entering on the phony pretext of fire codes.

Despite the overwhelming show of

force by the cops the demonstration was a strong step in building the unity necessary for the struggles ahead. Some victories were also secured, including School Superintendent Dr. Carol R. Johnson's withdrawal of her plan to kick middle school students off school buses, citing public protest to the clearly unsafe proposal. However, School Committee members took turns wringing their hands about future school closings, program eliminations, layoffs and the gutting of

student rights, like transportation and nutrition, and then promptly and unanimously passed the cuts.

The next stage of the struggle goes to the Boston City Council, which must approve the school budget. Today's newly energized community, labor and education advocates are already planning stepped up protests.

Gillis is vice president of the Boston School Bus Drivers union. Cook is a member of the Boston Teachers Union.

BOSTON

Women fight back

The Women's Fightback Network held a rally at the Massachusetts Statehouse March 24 commemorating International Women's Month. It demanded "Women Unite! Fight for jobs, schools, housing, reproductive rights and childcare!" The women then marched through downtown holding street rallies at busy intersections, ending at a rally at the Boston School Committee headquarters calling for full funding of public education.

— Report and photo by Liz Green



Following March 4 cop riot

Milwaukee 16 resist bogus charges

By Bryan G. Pfeifer

A diverse coalition of student and labor organizations at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and in the wider campus community is fighting trumped-up charges against the Milwaukee 16.

"On March 4, as part of the National Day of Action to Defend Education, 16 people were arrested at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee for protesting a university administration that is relying on students and workers to pay for an economic crisis that the bankers and wealthy elite created," Daniel Jaekle of SDS Milwaukee and the UWM Education Rights Campaign told Workers World.

In videos on YouTube and elsewhere, Milwaukee and UWM cops are seen engaging in an unprovoked riot against students who were attempting to deliver their demands to UWM Chancellor Carlos Santiago. Santiago had barricaded himself and his staff inside Chapman Hall, where his office is, and refused to

meet the students and workers. Santiago watched through a window as cops physically assaulted, handcuffed and racially profiled protesters.

Some students courageously resisted and defended themselves by throwing snowballs at the cops and at the Chapman Hall building. For this they were violence-baited by the administration, the cops and the corporate media. The 16 students have been charged with municipal citations of unlawful assembly and the UWM administration has threatened academic sanctions against them. Immediately following the arrests, supporters sprang into action and thus far several progressive lawyers have volunteered to work pro bono to defend the arrested students. Rallies, vigils and fundraisers for the students have taken place and legal training is ongoing.

Due to the ongoing resistance and protests by the UWM Education Rights Campaign, Santiago has agreed to attend a public town hall meeting on campus

to address the arrests of the Milwaukee 16 and the effects of the economic crisis on students and workers at UWM and in education generally.

"The UWM Education Rights Campaign remains committed to fighting all citations and charges against the Milwaukee 16. It was wrong and unjust for our university administration to declare our protest an unlawful assembly and bring in city police to arrest us. We will continue fighting the furloughs, layoffs and tuition hikes that plague the workers and working-class students on our campus. We're continuing to organize dozens of events despite this intimidation and assault on our right to fight back against unjust cuts. Education is a right!" concluded Jaekle.

The UWM Education Rights Campaign is asking supporters to contact Chancellor Santiago's office to demand all charges be dropped against the Milwaukee 16. Call 414-229-4331 or e-mail ces95@uwm.edu. For more information and updates on the campaign, go to www.sdsmke.com. □

Struggle escalates to stop Detroit school closings

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Detroit

A citywide meeting held March 27 at the Central United Methodist Church in downtown Detroit called for a united effort to address the escalating attacks against working people, including school closures, education and other public sector layoffs, and plans to seize municipal pension funds, downsize the city and sell the Medical Center to an outside Tennessee-based corporation.

Sponsored by the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs, the gathering included local activists, political officials and community organizers. Resolutions were adopted calling for opposition to school closings; a mass demonstration on April 20 at the mayor's office; and support for the May Day demonstration as well as the May 8 national march for jobs in Washington, D.C., being called by the Bail Out the People Movement.

A burgeoning political struggle in Detroit around the privatization of the school system and the conflict between city workers and the Dave Bing administration escalated on March 23 with two major demonstrations against the crisis in the public education system and Mayor Bing's corporate-engineered plans to "downsize" the city.

Demonstrations express outrage

Outside the offices of the state-appointed emergency financial manager 2,000 union members, community people and youth demonstrated, demanding an end to efforts to dismantle K-12 public education in the city. The picket was organized by the Coalition of Detroit Public Schools Unions, which includes clerical workers,

teachers and other employees. The protest was also attended by bus drivers from the Safeway transportation company whose contract has been cancelled in favor of First Student Transportation out of Ohio.

The bus drivers traveled to Lansing, the state capital, at least three times in mid-March to protest and meet with lawmakers. On March 23 they went again and won a pledge from the state legislative appropriations committee to hold hearings on the bidding process surrounding First Student.

The elected Detroit Board of Education, whose powers are being abrogated by the emergency financial manager, Robert Bobb, went to court on March 23 seeking an injunction to stop the proposed closing of 45 schools. A hearing will be held on April 16 in Wayne County Circuit Court.

Support for the unions and the forces opposing the dismantling and privatization is growing daily despite the intensive propaganda campaign being waged by the corporate media and private foundations such as Kresge and Skillman. These entities are praising the plans delivered by Bobb and Bing and ignoring and attacking the unions and community organizations that are challenging them.

After the demonstration at the DPS headquarters, more than 100 people marched down Woodward Avenue to Orchestra Hall, where Mayor Bing was slated to give his "state of the city" address. The demonstration was called by Moratorium NOW! and American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 207. Leaders from the DPS clerical workers union and other city locals joined the protest.

Bing's plan to "downsize" the city has been challenged by Moratorium NOW! and others. The ruling class interests represented by Bing have been compelled to

respond to allegations of forced displacement and the dismantling of city governance structures by corporate interests.

On March 23, WWJ news radio, the local CBS affiliate, ran reports all day on Moratorium NOW!'s opposition to downsizing the city and the demand for the declaration of a state of economic emergency and the imposition of a halt to foreclosures, evictions and utility shutoffs.

Moratorium NOW! issued a poster that pointed to the role of the banks in the crisis. It points out in plain language that there are hundreds of millions of dollars being paid in debt service while workers' salaries remain frozen and cut, schools are being closed and the capitalist class is openly advancing plans in the media to further dislocate and oppress the people.

At the March 27 town hall meeting, the Moratorium NOW! Coalition stated that its present task is to raise the level of the political struggle so a clear connection can be made between the assault on workers and the community in Detroit and the overall economic crisis in the capitalist system at present. Many workers and community activists have exclusively focused on Bobb and Bing as culprits in the process. Although this is true in appearance, both of them are acting on behalf of the interests of finance capital, which views the public sector, including public education and municipal pension funds, as ripe for seizure and exploitation.

City must cancel debt service to banks

In response to the crisis, community meetings are being held daily and there is a sense of urgency emerging among the people. The Moratorium NOW! Coalition will be making a major push to convey the necessity of united action and to stress the underlying causes of the crisis, which is not confined to Detroit but encompasses

the entire state and country.

The city's debt service payments to the banks and the role of the financial sector and the corporations in the crisis must be addressed.

Moratorium NOW! is demanding the city administration appeal directly to the federal government to immediately create jobs in Detroit. A letter to Bing was delivered two months ago and a resolution to the City Council has been submitted to this effect as well.

The mayor and City Council have not responded because of the corporate orientation of Bing and the stranglehold that the financial institutions have over Michigan's largest municipality. There is also a newly dominant group within the City Council which believes that school closings, downsizing and pension fund seizures are the only logical response to the economic crisis.

Moratorium NOW! reiterated at the March 27 meeting that a political struggle against the banks and corporations is necessary in order for these issues to be successfully addressed. The coalition has called for a demonstration April 20 to further pressure the corporate-backed officials and the banks to impose a freeze on foreclosures, evictions, utility shutoffs, school closings and downsizing.

On March 29 there will be a rally at Cooley High School on the city's northwest side to oppose the school's closing in June. Later the same day, the emergency financial manager will begin holding invitation-only meetings at Henry Ford High School to discuss the school closings.

Moratorium NOW! will support the rally at Cooley and picket the closed meeting at Henry Ford High School. The organization has developed a leaflet that outlines the major issues and emphasizes the need to build a mass struggle against the banks to halt the cutbacks, layoffs and closings. □

'The Last Truck: The Closing of a GM Plant'

A different tale of love and loss

By Martha Grevatt



FILM REVIEW

"The Last Truck: The Closing of a GM Plant" was shown March 26 at the Cleveland International Film Festival. The 2009 film portrays, through autoworkers' eyes, the process leading up to the closing of a General Motors assembly plant in Moraine, Ohio.

This writer participated in a panel discussion which included directors Julia Reichert (director of the 1976 classic, "Union Maids") and Steve Bognar, plus laid-off Moraine workers Kim, Darlene and Chuck. My plant, the Chrysler stamping plant in Twinsburg, Ohio, is scheduled to cease production in June and has been bought by Maynards, the same liquidator that will be auctioning the building and contents of Moraine Assembly.

For me, an autoworker for 22 years whose plant will close in a matter of months, "The Last Truck" was a powerful, eloquent and brutally realistic artistic statement.

I saw workers like myself who first learned — not from GM but from the news media — that their plant would be shuttered for good two days before Christmas, 2008. They talked about how hard they worked and how much it changed their lives to acquire a good-paying union job. They expressed their love for their coworkers — their "family" — a love that cut across lines of race, nationality, religion and sex and, by suggestion, sexual orientation. I felt proud when these union sisters and brothers challenged the near-unanimous

chorus of news commentators who insisted the financial woes of the auto industry were "all the union's fault."

The film depicted people like us — me and Kim and Darlene and Chuck — people with the knowledge of all that goes into producing an automobile. We have this knowledge in our bodies, our bones and muscle, our eyes, ears, heart, lungs, skin, fingers, knees and definitely our feet. In every cell of our body we know what goes into each vehicle that rolls off the line.

Our minds know it too — doing the same thing over and over for eight, 10, 12 hours, five or six or seven days a week, as the workers described. We know the crippling effect that it has on our intellect and creativity. Those of us who became skilled trades people know that exhilarating feeling — that rush — from suddenly, even within proscribed parameters, being able to use our brains on the job.

A powerful moment in the film was when it showed that winter day when all of these talented workers had to roll their toolboxes out of the plant. One could feel the solidarity as women and men helped each other hoist the boxes onto ice-encrusted truck beds.

I watched and listened as there on the big screen my brothers and sisters of IUE Local 798 showed the kind of people we are: not dense factory hands, but individual people with deep thoughts and feelings, expressed thoughtfully, astutely, politically and poetically — and with righteous anger. These are strong workers who revealed to us their tears and vulnerability, and did so

with dignity and integrity. That's the people of Moraine Truck and that's the people of Twinsburg Stamping, and we deserve to be treated better than this.

Feasting on the dead dragon

Toward the end of the film a woman worker tells us how she had an image come to her of a gigantic dragon dying, with all its various body parts shutting down one by one. Now that the plant has closed, Maynards, which calls itself "the preeminent liquidation and auction and appraisal company in North America," has invited vultures in to feast on the dragon's carcass.

Maynards' holdings include dozens of GM and other auto plants throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe. There are no plans to find buyers to restart these highly productive plants. The vast arsenal of robots, conveyor belts, stamping presses, machine tools, plastic molding machines and much more will be sold off piecemeal. Don't smell what you want in Moraine, the liquidator asks the vultures? Check out Twinsburg, check out Michigan, check out California, Missouri or our European holdings. We at Maynards will find you the specific organ that your profit-driven palates desire.

All the workers in the film have a sense that something is being taken away that rightfully belongs to them. "That's our plant," a brother in the film flat-out states. I agree. We have paid for these plants with the best years of our lives; we have outbid the highest bidders. We have earned the

right to own and operate the plants ourselves, especially since our bosses don't want them.

Workers in the Dayton, Ohio, area now face a terrible economic crisis. In addition to the 2,500 Moraine plant workers laid off permanently from GM, 10,000 more jobs were lost indirectly as a result of the closing. Delphi, the former parts division of GM that was Dayton's biggest private employer, closed all of its eight facilities, leaving the city with no auto plants.

Kim, an electrician, has finally found a job after 15 months, but it doesn't provide the pay and benefits he came to expect from GM. Darlene and Chuck have become full-time students under a state-sponsored program, but they had to jump through numerous hoops and choose from a narrow list of state-approved occupations before they could receive a subsidy. Whether their training will lead to meaningful employment remains to be seen.

By the end of 40 minutes, "The Last Truck," which was nominated for an Academy Award for best documentary short, had everyone in the sold-out audience in tears. This story of love and loss is the first serious film about plant closings since Michael Moore's 1989 classic, "Roger and Me."

The filmmakers stated that they wish they hadn't had to make this film. Now is the time to fight for a world where no one will have to make another one. A good place to start a protest campaign could be at any one of the plant auctions that Maynards — the liquidators of our futures — will be conducting this year. □

Activists campaign to save Baltimore home from foreclosure

By Steven Ceci
Baltimore

Community activists with the Network to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions held a picket line March 23 in front of the law offices of Cohn, Goldberg and Deutsch, LLC, a foreclosure firm. They were protesting to save the home of Renee Washington DeFreitas. Bank of America began the foreclosure process before it even reviewed her application for a loan modification.

Before leaving, activists went inside the law offices and delivered a letter with their demands. Sharon Black, a spokesperson for the group, told Workers World: "The attorneys inside the offices appeared rattled, startled and hostile. They're used to conducting business as usual — doing the bidding of the banks without angry workers expressing their outrage."

Black continued: "But this is what they should expect until there is justice in Renee DeFreitas' case. DeFreitas represents thousands of workers who are losing their homes while banks continue to get bailed out.

"In this case the attorneys have been un-

scrupulous in rushing to foreclose on her home even before the process of reviewing a loan modification has been made. In addition, Bank of America has not even had a face-to-face mediation meeting as stipulated by state law," Black exclaimed.

DeFreitas is a 51-year-old state employee and mother of five who did everything she was supposed to: She worked hard for long hours, volunteered for overtime when it existed, saved her money, and bought a home with the hope that she would have something as she grew older, both for herself and her children and grandchildren.

But state workers were forced to take pay cuts and nonpaid furlough days that drastically reduced DeFreitas' already meager salary. Her once "dream home" has now become a nightmare.

DeFreitas wrote a letter to HOPE (Home Owners Preserving Equity), a state-sponsored program to assist homeowners facing foreclosure. In it she stated: "I worked my whole life so I could get my own home, which I did, and also make me proud to have my own, but now it's a

burden. I have used my savings to pay my mortgage, along with my 401(k). I've even gone as far as asking family members to help. I have gone into my insurance policies in order to keep my house."

She also did everything right with Bank of America by filling out long forms and submitting over 44 pages of documentation to its BAC Home Loan Servicing to apply for a loan modification on her mortgage. But at the same time that she was being advised to fill out forms and to get in touch with HOPE, Bank of America began the foreclosure process.

Foreclosure crisis, bank bailouts continue

At a Dec. 8 congressional hearing, Laurie Goodman, senior managing director at Amherst Securities, testified that in the third quarter of 2009, 14.1 percent of borrowers — or 7.9 million homeowners — did not make their mortgage payments. She estimated that 7 million of these 7.9 million homeowners will lose their homes. (www.house.gov) Julie Gordon from the Center for Responsible Lending testified that with the effects of high unemployment, millions more would be added to these numbers. She estimated that by the time this crisis abates, as many as 13 million families will have lost their homes.

The Home Affordable Modification Program has fallen short because banks have simply not abided by the law. The promise of HAMP was that 3 to 4 million

homeowners would be helped with loan modifications. But to date only 650,000 homeowners are now in a trial modification. Only a fraction of those have actually received a permanent loan modification.

HAMP also does not address those workers who have lost their jobs, a major shortcoming for the 30 million who are unemployed and left out in the cold.

How is it that bank profits are rising even as foreclosures grow exponentially? The reason is that the government is increasingly guaranteeing bank losses due to foreclosures by reimbursing the lenders at the full value for overvalued mortgages when there are defaults. This "silent bailout" continues every day.

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the corporations that guarantee about half of the country's mortgages, were taken over by the government in July 2008. Fannie and Freddie are burning so much cash bailing out the lenders that the Treasury is considering an infusion of another \$400 billion in taxpayer funds into these entities. (New York Times, Dec. 17)

Coupled with funds from the AIG and GMAC bailouts, which are being utilized to pay off lenders on foreclosed properties, it is estimated that the total government lifeline to the banks could rise to \$1 trillion. The effect of this continued bailout is that it actually discourages bank lend-

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Unions picket at bailed-out banks 'Good jobs now!'

By Sean Schaftron

From San Francisco to Boston and points between, angry workers are showing up at banks demanding, "Good jobs now! Make Wall Street pay!" The AFL-CIO is organizing 200 actions across the U.S., targeting six large bailed-out banks: Morgan Stanley, Bank of America, Citibank, Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase and Wells Fargo/Wachovia.

In Buffalo on March 18 a gathering raised these demands outside Bank of America. The following day in Philadelphia a crowd of 1,000, with many unions represented, marched through downtown chanting, "No jobs, no future!" Many then marched through the lobby of a Bank of America office.

About 80 labor and community activists rallied outside the downtown Cleveland office of Morgan Stanley on March 22, where they listened as a number of speakers denounced the "banksters" and also engaged in street theater.

On March 25 in Boston more than 200 activists — from 40 unions — marched and demanded that jobs be restored.

On that same day the cold wind didn't stop a loud demonstration at Bank of Amer-

ica in Detroit. "Bail out the people, not the banks! What do we need? Moratorium!" chanted the crowd, demanding a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions as well as jobs. In a leaflet distributed at the main bank, the Metro-Detroit AFL-CIO charged Bank of America, Michigan's largest bank, with forcing homeowners into foreclosure. Jobs with Justice and the Moratorium NOW! Coalition supported the protest.

Also on March 25, dozens rallied in front of a downtown San Francisco branch of Bank of America demanding, "Good jobs now!" Organized by the S.F. Labor Council, the rally was attended by labor council officers and union delegates, the S.F. Living Wage Coalition, the Peace and Freedom Party Labor Committee, the Workers Emergency Recovery Campaign and the Bail Out the People Movement — Northern California.

Bank of America is getting bailout money at the expense of foreclosed homeowners and working and jobless workers all over the U.S. The San Francisco protestors chanted, "Bail out workers, not the banks!" and carried signs reading, "We are NOT your ATM."

Joan Marquardt contributed the report from San Francisco.

Over protests, MTA cuts more transit jobs

By Tony Murphy
New York

On March 24, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority continued to swing its budget axe, eliminating two major subway lines and dozens of buses in New York City.

The vote for this decision took place at its monthly board meeting. About 20 transit workers, mostly station agents, descended on the board to speak out at the public comments section of the meeting, as did representatives of the Bail Out the People Movement and other members of the public.

Station agents account for 450 of the 600 layoffs planned by the MTA for Transport Workers Union Local 100. Many union and other activists spoke at the podium about how the banks drain money out of the MTA.

The MTA went ahead and voted for the cuts, which will eliminate \$93 million in the agency's expenses. Media coverage included some station agent testimony about the hardships layoffs would impose. The coverage on the devastating cuts portrayed them as inevitable actions on the part of an agency constantly referred to as "cash-strapped."

Two days after this meeting, Bloomberg Business Week reported the MTA had hired an ex-Wall Street banker to be its new finance chief.

The March 26 article, "N.Y. MTA Taps Ex-Bear Stearns Banker for Finance Job," exposes how the agency is used to enrich banks and Wall Street firms while its board members impose hardships on the people they are supposed to serve.

The banker in question, Robert Foran,

helped the MTA "restructure" its debt in 2000 — a task even the *Business Week* article admitted added hundreds of millions to the MTA's debt service.

It also reported that Bear Stearns earned tens of millions of dollars in underwriting fees for advising the MTA on the restructuring.

Now the "cash-strapped" MTA is rewarding Foran of Bear Stearns by appointing him to oversee its finances.

In the meantime, the MTA is considering another fare increase, on the heels of one that just happened this year.

The media will help the MTA hide its role as cash cow for Wall Street until the workers do what the Republic Doors and Windows workers in Chicago did in December 2008 — use their power to shake the money out of the banks. □

RALEIGH, N.C. Struggle for jobs grows



PHOTO: RALEIGH FIST

On March 20 the Raleigh People's Assembly held a public meeting at the YWCA in east Raleigh about the struggle for jobs in North Carolina. Members of Black Workers For Justice, Electrical Workers Local 150-North Carolina Public Service Workers Union, Raleigh Fight Imperialism Stand Together, People's Empowerment Movement and other community

groups came together to build support for a resolution calling on the Raleigh City Council and other North Carolina elected officials to support a public jobs program that would be the size and scope of the Work Projects Administration of the 1930s, which created millions of jobs.

The resolution has already gained a lot of support. This includes endorsements from the North Carolina AFL-CIO, UE Local 150, Workforce Empowerment Alliance Community Team, State Reps. Larry Hall and Deborah Ross, North Carolina NAACP President Rev. William Barber, Sister Margaret Rose Murray of Shaw University Radio WSHA and several hundred others.

The People's Assembly is planning a news conference for April 8, the 75th anniversary of the passing of the WPA, to call on local officials to support such a bill that would address current mass unemployment.

The NAACP and other grassroots leaders have been meeting with Gov. Bev Perdue to pressure her to hold a Jobs Summit in mid-April to listen to the people speak on the crisis. The People's Assembly is also building for a mass rally at the May 4 Raleigh City Council meeting, where supporters of the resolution will call on the city's elected officials to officially endorse it.

— Dante Strobino

Google on an anti-communist crusade?

Or maybe they're just sore losers

By Gary Wilson

The headlines have proclaimed that Google has "quit" China in a "battle over censorship."

That's what Google told the capitalist media, so that's what's been reported.

There's no fine print in these reports. For example, only the search part of Google's operations is involved. Other Google business operations in China are continuing. And Google didn't quit China; the search operation was moved to Hong Kong, which is part of China.

In Hong Kong, Google's search operations are under different local laws. Uncensored? Not really. As PC World reported March 24, Google "blocks content such as porn and profanity." It's not that Google doesn't censor its search results.

In fact, Google has a history of working with governments and police authorities, including censoring its search results. Searches for information on attacking the U.S. government, for example, will turn up heavily censored results.

In India, Google has opened up search results to censorship by the police authorities. "Google is training police in India on how to find 'objectionable' material and remove it from Google," the Inquisitr reported on Sept. 24, 2008. (www.inquisitr.com)

Google even helped the police arrest a man who had anonymously posted the message, "I hate Sonia Ghandi" [sic].

Google said this was done at its own initiative. Vinay Goel, head of products for Google India, said, "You don't want to stifle the freedom of speech and yet, [you do want to] ensure that people are working within legal boundaries, are within the sensitivities of that culture. So if you find something offensive, flag it. We will review it. We have very specific terms and conditions and if that is violated by the user, we will bring it up. This model has worked well."

Evidently Google doesn't really have a problem with censoring search results, working with governments, following local laws, even helping to arrest someone

who says simply that they hate the country's top politician.

But what Google does hate is not winning.

Google has a world monopoly, almost. In all parts of the world, except in China, Google is the Internet. Google made a big push to also capture China. They bet big—and lost.

China has more than 400 million Internet users and almost a billion cell phone users. All use a search engine. The big search engine in China is Baidu, which services about 70 percent of all users.

Few used Google.cn

In China, anyone can use Google.com, the U.S.-based search engine that is not "censored" by Chinese law. But Google.com's servers are in the U.S., so the response time in China is very slow. Google.cn was opened to provide faster results. When people in China search using Google, they mostly use Google.com. The Google.cn site never gained more than 2 percent of the search market. This

is the site that Google has now shut down and is redirecting to Google.com.hk.

Few used Google.cn because the results were unsatisfactory. Blogger Jason Yu in "Google vs. Baidu: A User Experience Analysis" wrote that Google.cn results too often "direct us to Web sites that use traditional Chinese characters, which are used in Taiwan, Hong Kong and by the overseas Chinese community" (posted June 2, 2008, www.globalbydesign.com). In mainland China everything is done in simplified Chinese. It would be like Google.com redirecting all search results in English to Web sites in Chaucer's Middle English. Unreadable.

In a report on National Public Radio here, a Chinese scholar said that the only people he knew in China who used Google were those searching for results in English.

Anyway, Google has been losing ground from its high of 30 percent of China's users in 2005. Now it is calling it quits. The rest of what it says may be just a big show to cover its tracks while fleeing. □

On tour in U.S.

Latin American labor leaders share struggles

By Bob McCubbin
San Diego

It was only a one-day visit by participants in the Latin American Labor Leaders tour, but March 26 was filled with activity and politics. Shortly after a hurried breakfast, U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange representative Ignacio Meneses and Ronald Quesada Zamora, a national directorate member of the National Union of Social Security Fund Employees in Costa Rica, joined a picket line at the Bank of America building in downtown San Diego, one in a series of nationwide anti-bank actions called by the AFL-CIO. The featured speaker at the action was Liz Shuler, the first woman ever elected national secretary treasurer of that labor federation.

At midmorning, Meneses and Quesada sat down for an in-depth, informal discussion with leaders of Unión del Barrio, a California-based organization that has taken the lead in many struggles involving the Latino/a communities. Topics covered in great detail included the current situation in Costa Rica and Latin America in general, and the struggle here in the U.S. for full legalization for undocumented migrant and immigrant workers.

Next the guests were taken on a tour of the militarized border between San Diego and Tijuana, a stark metallic scar across the landscape that stands as an ugly testament to the U.S. government's unwavering racist posture with regard to Mexico and its workers.

A more uplifting experience was a guided tour by Unión del Barrio leader Ben Prado to see the inspiring political murals in San Diego's famed struggle-based Chicano Park.

An evening public meeting in one of the city's historic Latino/a neighborhoods drew an audience of more than 50, including both seasoned activists and many young people. Gloria Verdieu of the International Action Center and Ben Prado co-facilitated the meeting. Verdieu welcomed Meneses and Quesada and then presented the Costa Rican guest with a pin demanding freedom for the Cuban Five and another demanding freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal.



Participants in San Diego portion of labor tour.

WW PHOTO: BOB MCCUBBIN

Meneses opened the program with a review of the history of the hemisphere-wide neoliberal attacks against the working class and the meaning of ALBA, the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas.

Quesada spoke next. He contrasted the treatment of immigrant workers in Costa Rica, where they have the same rights and receive the same benefits as other workers, with the situation in the U.S. Having just spoken with Farm Labor Organizing Committee workers in Toledo, Ohio, he was fully aware of how even the most elementary rights are withheld from undocumented workers in the U.S.

But he also made clear that Costa Rica is no paradise for workers. There are increasing attempts there by transnational corporations to privatize public enterprises and, in the name of increasing efficiency, workers are losing their jobs. Although Quesada's union is affiliated with the progressive Latin American bloc ALBA, Costa Rica itself is not. Quesada explained how the U.S. dissuaded the Costa Rican government from affiliating by threatening an embargo against Costa Rica like the one it has maintained against Cuba for the last 50 years.

The high point of the meeting was a Skype hookup with Gilda Chacón Bravo, a leader of the Confederation of Cuban Workers. Chacón Bravo had agreed to participate in the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange tour and had applied for and been granted a visa by the U.S. State Department. However, the U.S. Interest Section in Havana delayed the return of her pass-

port, making travel impossible.

Nevertheless, using an Internet connection, Chacón's voice came through loud and clear to the San Diego meeting. She emphasized that the present economic crisis in the U.S. demonstrates the need for worker unity. And the terrible increase in unemployment internationally makes the ALBA program all the more important and necessary for the working class.

Discussion from the floor included a Unión del Barrio leader's announcement of his organization's plans for a May Day march and rally in San Diego, and an appeal by a Chilean activist for support for

the people's struggle there in the face of the recent earthquake disaster. A petition was circulated among the audience defending Cuba's sovereignty in the face of renewed efforts by the U.S. and the European Union to undermine its 50-year record of social progress. Finally, audience members contributed more than \$500 toward the guests' travel expenses.

The next day, in Los Angeles, tens of thousands who had assembled for an immigrant rights march heard a few words from Quesada. That afternoon a well attended multi-national meeting hosted by the Service Employees Local 721 Latino Caucus and Labor Community Coalition joined a cross section of workers from that union with interested community members and people who'd heard about the event at the earlier demonstration. Nearly every person signed a petition, read by Cristina Vazquez from Workers United, that supported Cuba against a current well-orchestrated and -funded phony "human rights" campaign. An evening meeting capped off the Southern California leg of the tour.

On March 28 the labor leaders went to Dallas, where they spoke at a church and at the Pan-African Connections Bookstore and Resource Center. The tour ends with events in New York on March 29. □

Women's History Month

Native women fight to reclaim equality

Continued from page 4

abortion, she challenged him and threatened to open up an abortion clinic. Most of her opposition, she said, came from white "right-to-life" men who even physically threatened her.

The power of Lakota women, she said, is strengthened by coming together as a clan. The role of Native women in tribal and state governments is increasing; most voters are women, as are most educators, medical professionals and administrators. All segments of society, though, must make commitments to have Native

voices heard regarding Native people's sovereignty and human rights, she added.

Today, Cecelia Fire Thunder's message to women everywhere is to "stand by what you believe, take risks, listen to the spirits and ancestors, and don't be afraid to fight back." The goal of women, she stated, is to "knock down barriers that limit the roles of women as tribal and community leaders, as well as in the larger society." She also mentioned she gained strength and energy from the experiences of all people of color who are survivors of injustice and inequality. □

U.S. and Israel

What's real and what's a smokescreen?

By Joyce Chediac

What do workers need to know about the disagreement between the U.S. and Israel?

Despite angry statements by U.S. officials and endless verbiage in the establishment media about what it all means, this disagreement is about a diplomatic embarrassment and is not substantial.

The U.S. is embarrassed because, on the same day that Vice President Joseph Biden arrived to show support for Israel, the Tel Aviv government announced it would build 1,600 more illegal housing units in East Jerusalem. Washington, which supports Israeli settlements on Palestinian land, had its mask of "honest broker" in Palestinian-Israeli talks ripped from its face and its complicity in the settlements revealed.

Washington has called in the spin doctors to try to put that shattered mask back together and give some credibility to its claim to be impartial as it arranges "proximity talks" to "get the peace process rolling" between the Netanyahu regime and the Palestinian Authority.

These "peace" talks have never been more than a diplomatic smokescreen for further U.S.-Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people. Ever-growing numbers in the West Bank and Gaza see the talks as against their interests.

How can you tell that the dispute is of

no real substance?

If Washington were really angry at Israel's anti-Palestinian policies, it could have opposed Israel's worst aggression on Gaza in 14 months. On March 26, five tanks and two armored bulldozers rolled into Gaza, firing. And the U.S. could have called Tel Aviv to task for the recent killing of four Palestinian youths in the West Bank by Israeli soldiers.

Not a peep was heard from Washington over these murders of Palestinians. In fact, while Israel was killing Palestinians in Gaza, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called measures taken by the Israeli government to resolve the dispute between the two governments "useful and productive."

U.S. supports Israeli settlements

The White House is calling on Israel to pull back on the settlement announced when Biden was there. However, it supports other settlements. A March 23 editorial by Stephen Maher on the Electronic Intifada website, entitled "The US-choreographed 'outrage' at Israel," points out that in March "the State Department explicitly approved Israel's construction of 112 new apartments in an illegal settlement outside Bethlehem." And Israel continues to strip Palestinians in East Jerusalem of their residency rights at unprecedented rates.

Maher explains that only a few days after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu restated his position that any "moratorium" on settlement building doesn't apply to settlements built in Israeli-occupied East Jerusalem, Obama received Netanyahu in Washington.

If there is any doubt on how deep this disagreement between Washington and Tel Aviv goes, just follow the money. Washington has in no way threatened to reduce its steady stream of funds to Israel — more than \$7 million a day.

Israel has been the Pentagon's pit bull in the Middle East for more than 60 years. Tensions between the two are bound to arise from time to time, but overall strategic interests remain the same — to crush the Palestinian and other struggles and to secure the oil-rich area for Washington and Wall Street.

Palestinian cultural and religious sites attacked

Washington has nothing to say about Israeli attempts to take over Palestinian and Muslim cultural and religious sites, another form of annexation. These measures have especially angered the Palestinian people. Zionist attacks on religious sites in Jerusalem, and other Muslim religious sites in the West Bank, have been met with angry demonstrations.

Israel just announced it will enlarge the Jewish prayer plaza at a wall in the Old City, rejecting a Jerusalem court's proposal to shelve the plan because it violates

the 1967 "status quo" arrangement covering the Old City's holy places. The site is an entrance to the mosque compound known as the Haram al-Sharif and is seen as an encroachment on it, an attempt to take it over. The compound contains the al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock mosque, some of the most sacred mosques in Islam.

Netanyahu's government has also declared that Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem and the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, deep in the West Bank, are "Jewish heritage sites." Palestinians in Bethlehem responded to the announcement with a three-day general strike, shutting businesses, schools and universities.

The Tomb of Rachel, a shrine to the Biblical matriarch revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims and the site of a mosque, is already on the Israeli side of the apartheid wall, as Israel is poised to annex it.

This week also saw Palestinian protests in Hebron, near the al-Ibrahimi mosque, which Israel is now calling the Tomb of the Patriarchs.

The Israeli government has plans to destroy the Mamilla Cemetery, an important Palestinian and Muslim cultural site in Jerusalem. Ironically, this Muslim cultural site would be leveled to build a "Museum of Tolerance!" To sign a petition opposing this outrage, visit [www.mamillacampaign.org](http://mamillacampaign.org). □

U.S.-style 'democracy' in Iraq

Al-Maliki loses election, represses opponents

By John Catalinotto

Contradicting all claims of having held a "fair election" in Iraq, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki is using the repressive state apparatus constructed under the U.S. occupation regime to attempt to hold onto power by force. Al-Maliki has targeted four elected representatives of the victorious Al-Iraqiya list in an attempt to downgrade this party to second place.

Two of the representatives are in hiding. One is in prison. The fourth, a woman, has disappeared from sight, according to a March 28 investigative article in the McClatchy newspapers.

Al-Maliki has said he won't accept the vote count from the January election. These results were finally made public in late March. Al-Iraqiya, whose leader is Ayad Allawi, won the most seats, 91, but not a majority of the 325-seat parliament. The "State of Law Coalition," led by al-Maliki, won 89 seats. The National Iraqi Alliance came in third with 70 seats.

During the election campaign, the regime banned 499 candidates for allegedly being linked to the Ba'ath Party, which was the ruling party before the U.S. invasion. All the banned candidates were from secular parties not connected with one or another religious sect.

No one should forget that there are still nearly 100,000 U.S. troops occupying Iraq — and almost the same number of mercenaries, called contractors. The seven-year-long U.S. occupation has led to the death of an estimated 1 million Iraqis and the dislocation of another 5 million, about one-fifth of the country. The occupation has also fomented bitter sectarian fighting among Iraqis.

Workers World consulted on the election with Joachim Guilliard, a German anti-war activist, writer and key organizer

of the German Iraq Coordination. Guilliard has contributed to two books about Iraq. He testified in New York at the August 2004 people's tribunal organized by the International Action Center, which found the U.S. guilty of war crimes for its invasion and occupation of Iraq.

In Guilliard's opinion: "Many found it surprising that the opposition Al-Iraqiya List won the most seats in parliament. But this was no proof that the vote was fair. It took place once again under the conditions of a brutal occupation regime that carried out expulsions of candidates, mass imprisonments and the murder of political opponents.

"Al-Iraqiya won not because of the repression and manipulation of votes, but despite them. Apparently these repressive steps brought a large sector of the enemies of the occupation behind this electoral

alliance that had the best outlook for victory" over the current occupation regime.

Explaining the election results, Guilliard wrote: "The Western media like to personalize everything, and so in general they speak of the victory of Ayad Allawi. But above all it was the most nationalist and overwhelmingly secular groups and personalities in the list who were voted in."

Guilliard pointed out that Allawi was once a close U.S. ally and co-responsible for the bloody invasion of the city of Fallujah, but that many Iraqis who oppose the occupation appeared to get behind al-Iraqiya anyway in order to work toward removing the U.S. troops.

"On his own, the former interim premier and CIA collaborator Allawi would have been hardly more attractive than he was in 2005, when in alliance with the Iraqi Communist Party [which col-

laborates with the occupation — WW] he was only able to obtain 8.2 percent of the votes," Guilliard added.

The most progressive thing the vote represents, wrote Guilliard in his article in the March 29 issue of Junge Welt, a progressive German daily, is "the clear rejection of a policy that bases itself on religious and confessional differences and a clear vote for a unitary, centrally ruled and independent government. Al-Iraqiya won votes not only in the majority Sunni provinces, but, for example, also in Baghdad, where the great majority belong to the Shiite confession, but are traditionally overwhelmingly non-religious in their politics."

Guilliard emphasized that "whoever is the new head of government in the next couple of months, the power still lies in the hands of the occupying forces." □

Fighting N. Carolina resegregation

Continued from page 1

public universities.

The all-white majority was elected on a promise to dismantle the busing system in Wake County and implement a program they call "neighborhood schools," which is nothing but a thinly veiled guise for resegregation.

If the shift to "neighborhood schools" is allowed to reach its conclusion, there will be a two-tiered education system in Wake County: well-funded, less-crowded schools with mostly affluent white students, and poorly funded, overcrowded, high-poverty schools in Black and Latino/a communities. In effect, a return to the ugly, segregated past of Jim Crow.

This attack on oppressed people and communities in Wake County, which

would devastate the quality of education available to Black and Latino/a students in the county, has galvanized the NAACP and other organizations to mount strong opposition to this plan.

Struggle to end resegregation

Fifty years ago, students stood up to fight back against racist, Jim Crow segregation in the U.S. South, ushering in a landslide of historic and monumental changes in society. Today, students are taking action to defend those gains and the right of all students to a quality, public education from the attacks of the right-wing, Resegregationist 5.

The new majority has faced overwhelming opposition every step of the way as evidenced by the bold action taken

at the school board meeting on March 23. Despite the fact that the new majority passed the resolution to begin the transition to "neighborhood schools," the struggle led by students opened political space and emboldened the board minority to propose and pass two amendments to the resolution.

This fight is only in its early stages. If the action at the March 23 school board meeting is any indication, students and community members are committed to continuing to build the struggle to stop resegregation. The newly installed right-wing board's plan to move to "neighborhood schools" will not remain in the face of united community resistance.

We say no to Jim Crow — we won't go back! □

For May Day unity

May Day went by uncelebrated publicly for three decades in the U.S. before 2005, when the Million Worker March and others made a first effort to revive the international workers' holiday in New York City's Union Square. In 2006 a mighty immigrant upsurge and general strike of millions on May Day put it back on the entire U.S. map.

Since then, the May 1st Coalition for Worker & Immigrant Rights has kept May Day alive in New York, drawing many immigrant workers and unionists to an annual demonstration in the center of world imperialism. For the fifth year, this coalition has been mobilizing for a powerful May Day action in Union Square, this time with an endorsement from the students who organized the March 4 national protests.

Good thing, because this year's May Day is more important than ever as the economic and financial crisis continues to strike a heavy blow against workers here and abroad. An economic recovery without jobs, along with increasing poverty, homelessness, disease and no end to the discriminatory, corporate-run health care system, lies ahead. The escalation of war abroad in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan and the militarization of the U.S. border with Mexico demands a response. And there is more need than ever to fight for immigration reform that legalizes the presence of 12 million workers who have already earned the right to stay and work here without fear of raids and deportation.

When some union members and staffers in New York also called for an action to revive May Day, it seemed like another step forward in the workers'

struggle. Some union activists were attracted to this call. Many assumed that it was a continuation of the immigrants' call, but with additional union backing, and that there would be a big, united demonstration. To the dismay of anyone who learns of it, the organizers of the second May Day call chose to schedule their rally in a place other than Union Square, thus dividing the working-class response.

When, at a March 21 workshop at the Left Forum, representatives of the May 1st Coalition for Worker & Immigrant Rights urged the organizers of the second action to hold a united action, and asked them why they would want to call a separate May Day gathering, those who made the second call simply refused to answer.

Does this lack of an answer mean they can still reconsider? There must be hundreds of union activists and thousands of union members as well as thousands of immigrant workers who would much prefer a united action. They don't want to be in a position of having to choose between two May Day actions. Their wishes must be respected.

Whatever political differences need to be expressed — and this is still unclear — it is still possible and important for the organizers of the two coalitions to find a way to a united action. There have been many ways this has been done in the history of the working-class movement, and it is certain that such a way exists if the leaders have the will to find it.

A powerful, massive, united fightback is urgently needed. Let the May Day organizers find a principled path to that united struggle. □

Marxists struggle over ideas at Left Forum

Continued from page 3
dent protest. The panel, chaired by Doug Singsen of CUNY Campaign to Defend Education, also featured the Transport Workers Union's community liaison Marvin Holland; Tami Gold, Professional Staff Congress chapter chair at Hunter College; and New York City teacher John Lawhead. There was a good give and take between the audience and the panel, including a debate about two May Day proposals.

FIST activist Easton Smith also participated in a panel on student organizing.

A battle over ideas took place in a May Day workshop where some unionists called for taking back May Day as a day of worker protest in New York's

Foley Square. This otherwise progressive impulse had a negative side: it excluded the May 1st Coalition for Worker & Immigrant Rights that was already organizing its fifth consecutive May Day protest in Union Square around the key slogans of legalization for undocumented workers and jobs for all.

Intervening in the discussion, Brenda Stokely and others from the May 1st Coalition for Worker & Immigrant Rights insisted that the panelists stop splitting the workers' movement and asked them why they couldn't hold a united protest. The speakers stonewalled, refusing to address the question. (See editorial.)

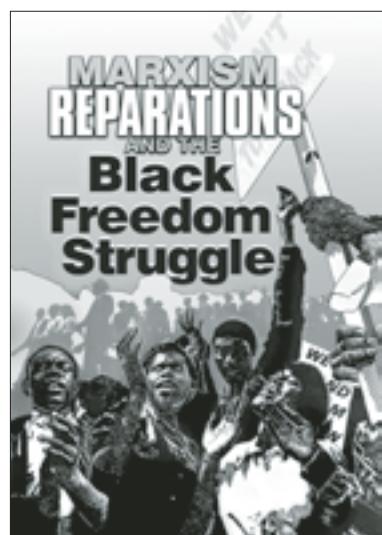
Naomi Cohen contributed to this article.

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper.

Edited by Monica Moorehead. Includes:

- Racism, National Oppression & Self-Determination Larry Holmes
- Black Labor from Chattel Slavery to Wage Slavery Sam Marcy
- Black Youth: Repression & Resistance Leilani Dowdell
- The Struggle for Socialism Is Key Monica Moorehead
- Black & Brown Unity: A Pillar of Struggle for Human Rights and Global Justice! Saladin Muhammad
- Alabama's Black Belt: Legacy of slavery, sharecropping and segregation Consuela Lee
- Harriet Tubman, Woman Warrior Mumia Abu-Jamal
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- Racism and Poverty in the Delta Larry Hales
- Haiti Needs Reparations, Not Sanctions Pat Chin



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Low-Wage Capitalism

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On the Picket Line

By Sue Davis

Rio Tinto withdraws illegal demands

Attempting to force 600 Borax workers in International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 30 to accept a concessionary contract, Rio Tinto locked them out on Jan. 31. The union went on the offensive, filing charges with the National Labor Relations Board that RT had violated a host of labor laws by making unlawful demands and ultimatums. On March 5 Rio Tinto, the second-largest mining company in the world, withdrew some of the illegal demands. But negotiations can only resume after Rio Tinto ends the lockout. To keep the pressure on, the ILWU plans demonstrations at British consulates in Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles on April 16, following a demonstration at RT's annual shareholders' meeting in London on April 15.

Janitors win in Minneapolis

It took three years of determined organizing — and the threat of a strike on March 1 — for 4,000 janitors in Minneapolis to win a decent contract. The Service Employees Local 26 workers launched an aggressive campaign that included developing leaders and making alliances with community and environmental groups. As they marched through downtown skyways and suburban malls to pressure building owners to raise wages, the workers, mostly immigrants and people of color, gave the bosses a lesson in working-class unity as they chanted, "Yes, we can!" followed by "iSí se puede!" in Spanish and "Haa warkanaa!" in Somali. After a marathon bargaining session on Feb. 27-28, the Minneapolis-St. Paul Contract Cleaners Association agreed to a three-year contract. Now custodians will not lose their jobs if building owners change cleaners. Six-hour shifts will become seven hours in a year and eight hours the year after, enabling the workers to earn 38 percent more income. Though management started negotiations demanding a \$5-an-hour pay cut, the workers will get immediate 25-cent-an-hour raises, followed by 10-cent-an-hour raises the next two years. Health insurance will be more affordable after it's reorganized. Management agreed to use green cleaning products and work with the union to make a transition from night to day jobs.

Media workers fight cutbacks

Reuters workers in New York, Washington and Chicago held a series of picket lines in March protesting 10 percent wage and benefits cuts that Thomson Reuters imposed after claiming bargaining was at an impasse. Members of the Newspaper Guild-Communication Workers Local 31001 point out that these cutbacks are outrageous, given the \$36 million benefits package showered on the company's CEO in 2008. TNG-CWA has filed several unfair labor practice charges against the company. Thomson Reuters even attempted to stop workers from wearing red to show solidarity during negotiations!

On March 15 National Public Radio audio engineers and technicians, represented by CWA's Local 52031, braved wind and rain to expose NPR's hypocritical negotiating demands. After the workers agreed to concessions last year amounting to \$17,000 per worker over 18 months, NPR now wants to cut half of the engineers' jobs, end workers' input into benefit plans, and renege on restoring its full contribution to the workers' retirement fund. The current contract expires March 31. The workers want supporters to e-mail CEO Vivian Schiller at vschiller@npr.org or call 202-513-2000 to demand she treat workers with the respect that NPR listeners expect. Also join and support the workers on the Facebook page, "People Who Like People Who Work @ NPR."

U. of Wis. faculty, research assistants organizing

Faculty at University of Wisconsin campuses in Eau Claire and Superior could be the first to form unions under a 2009 law giving 20,000 academic workers the right to bargain collectively. Organizers on both campuses say they've collected cards signed by 70 percent or more of faculty members requesting to join the American Federation of Teachers. A simple majority vote on each campus will create a union empowered to negotiate wages, benefits and working conditions. (Associated Press, March 10) Meanwhile, research assistants could become the first Wisconsin state employees to unionize without having to hold an election. All they have to do, according to the new law, is have a majority of assistants sign union cards. The Teaching Assistants' Association at UW-Madison hopes to organize 1,800 research assistants. However, a discriminatory measure, which was protested when it was first proposed, bars 700 international students from joining the union. (AP, March 9) □

Low-Wage Capitalism

Fred Goldstein

Haitians protest Bush-Clinton visit



Haitian woman holds picture of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide during protest near the destroyed National Palace as former U.S. Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton visited Port-au-Prince.

The health care law, racism and fighting the right

Continued from page 3

right-wing billionaires behind the Scaife and Koch foundations. It was aided by the insurance companies and other corporate interests at various times in the struggle against the health care bill and environmental legislation.

To be sure, fascism is hardly on the horizon. The dominant threat to the working class is still the capitalist state, the police, the FBI, Homeland Security and ICE, the courts, etc. And the struggle for jobs and to push back the economic crisis must be directed at the capitalist government.

But there is growing political erosion in the morale of the workers, the oppressed and the political movement because the racist, sexist, anti-immigrant and homophobic conglomeration of rightists and fascists has gone unopposed. This is dangerous to solidarity and to the fighting spirit.

While carrying on the struggle against the economic crisis, it is necessary to intervene and block the seemingly unobstructed progress of the ultra-right, which thrives on getting the spotlight from the capitalist media. Without militant opposition, these right-wing riffraff are made to look 10 feet tall.

Sarah Palin is scheduled to speak at a Tea Party rally in Boston on April 14. The Bail Out the People Movement is mobilizing to bring forces together to oppose this rally. This is an important step. It is time to fight the right — with militant, class struggle methods.

Goldstein is author of the book "Low-Wage Capitalism," a Marxist analysis of globalization and its effects on the U.S. working class. He has written numerous articles and speaks on the present economic crisis. For more information visit www.lowwagecapitalism.com.

Activists campaign to save Baltimore home from foreclosure

Continued from page 7

ers from reducing the principal on mortgages whose values they inflated through their predatory lending practices. This is because they know the government will pay them full value. In addition, why even abide by HAMP and keep people in their homes when there is so much profit to be made by foreclosures?

Moratorium now!

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition in Michigan and the Community/Labor Coalition for a Moratorium in Los Angeles have been leading the way in calling for a halt on all foreclosures and evictions. The present situation cries out for a moratorium.

Jerry Goldberg, an attorney with the Moratorium NOW! Coalition, pointed out, "Even the Helping Families Save Their Homes Act passed in May 2009 states that it is the sense of Congress that there should be a moratorium on foreclosures until the Treasury Department certifies that HAMP has been implemented." HAMP has obviously not been

implemented.

The Network to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions is calling on people to "stand up against the banks." In Baltimore, activists are launching a campaign to stop Bank of America's foreclosure of Renee DeFreitas. This includes not only a national petition campaign, but picket lines, meetings and protests. It also includes utilizing whatever legal avenues may be at our disposal.

Black explained: "We cannot allow a trillion-dollar bank like BOA, which has received millions of our tax dollars, to destroy the lives of our friends, neighbors and co-workers and to get away with this. Every empty house not only crushes the dreams of its former occupants — it crushes the dreams of an entire community. If push comes to shove, we will organize a 'community stay-in' at Renee's house' to stop the sheriff."

To make a donation or get involved, contact the Network to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions at 2011 N. Charles St., lower level, Baltimore, MD 21218; phone: 410-218-4835 or e-mail apcbaltimore@pipeline.com. □

By LeiLani Dowell

Some 100 Haitians protested the visit of former U.S. Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton to their country on March 22. The two were touring Haiti in advance of a United Nations donors' conference.

Many have not forgotten that both Bush and Clinton, during their tenures as president, played major roles in attacks on the Haitian people. Throughout his presidency Clinton stopped Haitian refugees from emigrating to the U.S., continuing a naval blockade to prevent Haitians from entering Florida. He also demanded severe neoliberal reforms from democratically elected Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide,

who had been overthrown in a coup d'état during the first Bush administration but returned to office after mass pressure.

Next came Bush, who presided over the illegal removal of President Aristide, a member of the progressive Fanmi Lavalas party. U.S. Marines and "diplomats"

forced Aristide into exile in 2004. Since the Jan. 12 earthquake this year Aristide has urged that he be allowed to return to Haiti to help with the rebuilding efforts.

One protester, Elizabeth Pierre, said: "I hear that former President George Bush is here. I am asking President Clinton to excuse himself so I can talk to George Bush, because George Bush is President Aristide's kidnapper."

The protest took place in front of the National Palace, where the two former presidents were meeting with Haitian President René Préval.

The Obama administration appointed Bush and Clinton to lead the U.S. "fundraising" effort in Haiti — ensuring that these efforts would be more about continued imperialist plunder in the country than about the people's struggle to survive there.

A videotape of the two presidents' trip has generated debate as to Bush's intentions. The video, originally posted on the BBC Web site, shows Bush shaking the hand of Haitians, then wiping his hand on Clinton's sleeve. The racist gesture mirrors Bush's actions toward the survivors of Hurricane Katrina on the U.S. Gulf Coast in 2005, when he couldn't be bothered to touch down in the area, but rather flew over it. □

MUNDO OBRERO

El proyecto de ley sobre salud: ¿Qué significa para los/as trabajadores/as?

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la ley de cuidado de salud, tan mínima como es, ha sido atacada por los/as republicanos/as y los/as derechistas extremos del movimiento del Partido del Té que incluye a verdaderos/as fascistas. Los/as republicanos/as y las corporaciones han trabajado con el movimiento del Partido del Té para avivar las llamas del racismo y los sentimientos anti-homosexuales y anti-inmigrante.

Hubo una demostración con muestras fascistas frente al edificio del Capitolio en Washington, DC, el día en que pasó la ley cuando una multitud le gritó epítetos racistas a John Lewis, un representante africano-estadounidense de Georgia y líder del movimiento de derechos civiles, y le escupió a otro legislador negro. Esta pandilla entonces atacó al Rep. Barney Frank de Massachusetts quien es homosexual, y le gritó difamaciones anti-homosexuales. Es de destacar que a esta pandilla la policía del Capitolio le permitió acercarse a los legisladores.

Los/as derechistas intentaron derrumbar la presidencia de Obama por medio de la ley del cuidado de salud. Ya hay discusión entre los/as republicanos de tratar de derogar la ley e iniciar una nueva movilización ultra-derechista.

Este hecho no hace que la ley sea mejor. Pero sí significa que el movimiento de trabajadores/as, el movimiento progresista y revolucionario, deben trabajar juntos para combatir agresivamente cualquier contraataque racista y reaccionario por el lado derecho mientras que a la vez de-

manda un verdadero sistema de cuidado de salud universal.

No se sabe al presente si los elementos derechistas tendrán éxito. Pero el movimiento progresista fue sorprendido durante la campaña de mítines municipales el otoño pasado, cuando los primeros ataques derechistas fueron lanzados contra la ley de cuidado de salud mientras azuaban una campaña racista contra Obama.

Estar advertido es estar preparado. La lucha por el cuidado de salud puede ser llevada a la lucha contra los/as derechistas sin abandonar una posición progresista y de clase trabajadora. Luchar contra los/as racistas agresivamente mientras exigimos cuidado de salud universal y de calidad y Medicare para todos/as, se puede y se debe hacer. "¡El cuidado de salud es un derecho!" debe hacerse el grito de combate del movimiento junto a las consignas pro-inmigrante, por derechos del aborto, anti-racista, etc. Esta es la manera de resistir cualquier movilización derechista y racista basada en la oposición a la ley del cuidado de salud.

El liderazgo del Partido Demócrata se ha rendido totalmente al lado derechista. Los/as trabajadores/as, comunidades oprimidas, estudiantes y jóvenes, todos/as tienen un interés en esta lucha. Puede unirse a la lucha por empleos, contra los recortes de presupuesto y ejecuciones hipotecarias, y para rescatar la educación pública. Todos estos frentes en la lucha de clase forman la base para articularnos en Asambleas Populares u otros órganos de poder popular que pueden unirse para lanzar un poderoso movimiento anti-capitalista. □

Libertad para los cinco cubanos



Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar, Rene González Sehwerert, Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez and Fernando González Llort.

El proyecto de ley sobre salud: ¿Qué significa para los/as trabajadores/as?

Por Fred Goldstein

Decenas de millones de personas en este país tenían la esperanza de ser liberadas de las garras de los despiadados especuladores que controlan el sistema de salud y tenían la esperanza de un sistema de salud universal. Pero lo opuesto ha ocurrido.

La llamada ley de reforma de salud, firmada por el Presidente Barack Obama el 23 de marzo, ha consolidado y legalizado la situación de las compañías y quienes se benefician financieramente de la salud, como la fuerza central en el sistema de atención de la salud — con una supervisión y regulación mínima por parte del estado capitalista.

Además, este proyecto de ley ha sido aprobado negociando los derechos reproductivos de la mujer y los derechos de los/as inmigrantes indocumentados/as y documentados/as. Su efecto es destruir la solidaridad mientras se le da la espalda a millones, en su mayoría mujeres pobres y a inmigrantes.

Una declaración de Terry O'Neill, presidenta de la Organización Nacional de Mujeres, explicó que uno de los efectos del proyecto de ley es hacer imposible el financiamiento público del aborto y el financiamiento privado, casi imposible. Ella escribió que el proyecto de ley “impone la extraña exigencia a los/as afiliados/as al plan de seguros que compran su cobertura a través de los intercambios de seguro de salud a que escriban dos cheques mensuales (uno para un proveedor de servicios de aborto y otro para los otros servicios de salud). Incluso los empleadores tendrán que escribir dos cheques separados para cada una de sus empleadas que soliciten servicios de aborto”.

O'Neill también escribió que “el proyecto de ley impone severas restricciones a la capacidad de los/as inmigrantes para acceder a la atención de la salud, imponiéndoles un período de cinco años de espera a los/as residentes legales antes de que sean elegibles para recibir asistencia como Medicaid, y a los/as trabajadores indocumentados prohibiéndoles incluso que utilicen su propio dinero para comprar un seguro de salud a través de un intercambio. Estas disposiciones ... están ahí por el grotesco sentimiento anti inmigrante, y deben ser eliminadas”.

Quienes lucharon valientemente por algún tipo de atención médica a nivel nacional de tipo universal fueron dejados de lado por la dirigencia del Partido Demócrata y la administración de Obama. El sistema de pagador único fue empujado fuera de la agenda y sustituido por la minúscula disposición de una “opción pública”. Esto fue más bien una concesión para cambiar el tema. La administración de Obama había negociado desde el principio con la industria del cuidado de salud y acordaron que no habría una opción pública.

De esta forma, la atención de la salud seguirá siendo vendida como una mercancía en el mercado capitalista con fines

de lucro, en vez de ser el derecho que debía ser. Esto contrasta con la atención socializada de la salud en Cuba, donde por ejemplo a pesar de un bloqueo estadounidense que ha empobrecido al país durante décadas, la atención médica es gratuita y accesible para todos/as. Esto es porque el sistema socialista de Cuba significa que las necesidades de las personas son una prioridad, no las ganancias, como en el capitalismo.

Una de las características de este proyecto de ley es que se han mantenido a las masas en la oscuridad sobre el proceso y el propio proyecto de ley desde el principio hasta el final. Sólo los políticos y los grupos de presión de las industrias del cuidado de salud y diversos profesionales de la medicina pudieron seguir el curso interno de las negociaciones. Ahora que se ha terminado, varios expertos burgueses surgen para “explicar” el proyecto de ley.

Los/as trabajadores/as tendrán que esperar hasta el año 2014, mientras 45.000 mueren al año

Los detalles enterrados en el proyecto de ley saldrán a la luz con el tiempo, o tal vez nunca. Éstas son algunas de las características principales del proyecto de ley que han salido.

Para empezar, aún el proyecto más optimista estima que 23 millones de personas seguirán sin seguro médico en el año 2014.

El proyecto de ley impone condiciones onerosas a millones de personas sin seguro que, a partir de 2014, se verán obligadas a comprar un seguro de salud de una compañía de seguros o de lo contrario, serán multadas. Esta es la versión del proyecto de ley de dar una cobertura más amplia. Fue el resultado de un acuerdo con las compañías de seguros para ampliar su base de clientes que ha estado disminuyendo y que ha sufrido durante la crisis económica, cuando millones de trabajadores/as han perdido sus empleos y sus seguros, y para garantizar miles de millones de ganancias futuras.

En el 2014 los/as trabajadores/as y la clase media tendrán que estar en uno de los 50 intercambios estatales. Esta atomiza aun más a la clase obrera, dejando la obligación al individuo para encontrar un seguro “accesible” en el Internet. Aun cuando las primas de seguros sean asequibles, los co-pagos y deducibles pueden ser miles de dólares que hacen impráctico el utilizar efectivamente el seguro.

Medicare Advantage, la atención domiciliaria y los pagos hospitalarios se van a reducir en \$200 mil millones. Esto es una amenaza para las personas de la tercera edad y las discapacitadas, a pesar de las garantías dichas de que nada va a ser cortado. Los recortes se harán en el reembolso a las compañías privadas de seguros que trabajan a través de Medicare Advantage, lo que seguramente hará reducir los servicios.

Los/as adultos/as con condiciones pre-existentes tendrán que esperar hasta

2014, cuando la cobertura ya no puede ser negada. Las familias pobres de cuatro personas que ganan menos de \$29.327 — 16 millones de personas — tendrán que esperar cinco años para estar cubiertas por Medicaid. Mientras tanto, 45.000 muertes prevenibles tienen lugar cada año por la falta de seguro, de acuerdo con la Escuela de Medicina de Harvard. La mitad de todas las quiebras personales se debe a los gastos médicos.

El proyecto de ley por supuesto, tiene algunos elementos positivos que cubren las prácticas más absurdas y universalmente odiadas de las compañías de seguros. Cualquier elemento positivo debe ser estudiado de cerca por los/as trabajadores/as y aprovechado al máximo. Muchas de las prácticas que estarán eliminadas fueron expuestas en la popular película de Michael Moore, “Sicko”.

En el corto plazo, las compañías de seguros ya no podrán negar la cobertura si usted está enfermo/a. No podrán poner un tope de por vida en la cobertura. Y no podrán negar a los niños el acceso a causa de una condición pre-existente. Los/as jóvenes hasta los 26 años de edad podrán permanecer en el plan de sus padres, aunque podría haber una prima adicional.

Sin embargo, millones de trabajadores/as tendrán que seguir dependiendo de sus jefes para obtener su atención médica. Si usted pierde su trabajo, también perdería el cuidado de salud. En esta época de despidos, desempleo masivo y subempleo, hay una epidemia de personas que pierden su cobertura basada en su trabajo. Y si se les permite mantener el seguro médico después de despedidos/as, pocos/as pueden permitirse el lujo de pagar una tarifa de grupo, y menos aún una individual.

Más importante es que las compañías de seguros serán las encargadas del proceso inmediato de revisión. El Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos eventualmente podría tener un mayor nivel de revisión. Pero las compañías son expertas en mentir, manipular y en el largo plazo, absorber multas a fin de evitar dar coberturas que serían más caras que las multas. Se trata del caso del zorro que conserva el derecho de cuidar a las gallinas.

Seguridad Social y Medicare

El liderazgo del Partido Demócrata promueve este proyecto de ley como el sucesor en la tradición de la creación de la Seguridad Social y el Medicare.

De hecho, lo opuesto es cierto. Los/as marxistas deben tratar de comprender la diferencia, no sólo en términos de personalidades o partidos, sino viendo las circunstancias objetivas en que estas diferentes piezas legislativas se aprobaron y cuáles son las diferencias de clase. El factor más importante es ver la relación de las fuerzas de clase que existían entonces y que existen ahora.

El proyecto de ley de Seguridad Social fue aprobado en 1935 como parte del

“New Deal” (la política de recuperación económica y social en los años 30) de Franklin Roosevelt. Pero sólo fue aprobado después de un período de lucha de masas contra el desempleo, la famosa Marcha para los Bonos de los veteranos en Washington, DC, y la destrucción del campamento de veteranos de guerra por las tropas federales en una batalla abierta. Siguió a las huelgas generales en San Francisco, Minneapolis, Minnesota, y Toledo, Ohio, en 1934.

Aún así, se trataba de una concesión en la que los patronos quedaron con la obligación de pagar sólo la mitad de la Seguridad Social y los/as trabajadores/as la otra mitad. Pero se convirtió en un derecho de la clase trabajadora. El dinero era controlado por el gobierno para los trabajadores y pagado cada mes por el gobierno.

Medicaid y Medicare fueron aprobadas en 1965 como parte del programa “Gran Sociedad” del Presidente Lyndon Johnson. Estas leyes no fueron aprobadas porque el gobierno capitalista súbitamente se hizo socialmente consciente. Fueron pasadas después de 10 años del movimiento por derechos civiles, rebeliones masivas en las calles de Harlem, NY, y Los Ángeles, y un creciente movimiento de liberación nacional aquí en los Estados Unidos.

Así como la Seguridad Social, Medicare y Medicaid se hicieron un derecho político y legal de la clase trabajadora y de los pobres. No fueron concedidas a las compañías privadas y puestas en el mercado capitalista como productos de consumo.

La actual ley de cuidado de salud refleja el hecho de que el movimiento de la clase trabajadora, incluyendo el movimiento de los/as oprimidos/as, ha estado a la defensiva durante mucho tiempo y todavía no ha comenzado a luchar.

Consecuentemente, el destino de la ley de cuidado de salud en realidad fue luchado por facciones diferentes dentro de la clase dominante y sus dos partidos políticos sin ninguna intervención significante por parte de las masas. Acuerdos secretos fueron hechos con las camarillas de cabilderos representando los intereses de las compañías farmacéuticas y los hospitales, como también con elementos de la industria aseguradora médica. Cuando fueron revelados estos acuerdos, no hubo ninguna respuesta de las masas. Ganaron los dueños y patrones, relativamente sin ningún obstáculo o amenaza desde abajo. El liderazgo del movimiento sindical se redujo a protestas minúsculas y a cabildeo. Y las comunidades y el movimiento político no pudieron movilizarse a pesar de intentos militantes por parte de varios grupos que luchaban por el cuidado de salud universal.

Luchar contra ataques derechistas y racistas

Pero esto debe conducir a la próxima etapa de la lucha. El gran problema para el movimiento de trabajadores/as es que

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